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charity. This form of help is sane, self-respecting and businesslike, and is apparently the most effective way by which manufacturers and merchants

abroad may obtain the equipment and supplies that will permit them, in due time to liquidate their debts here in full.

## Improvements in British Empire Trade Information— The Imperial Statistical Conference

By R. H. COATS

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**A**N outline of recent improvements in British Empire trade information may take as a starting-point the Dominions Royal Commission, appointed in 1912. The Commission had its origin in a resolution of the Imperial Conference of the previous year, its instructions being to report comprehensively on the natural resources and production of the Empire, with special reference to the possible improvement and extension of Inter-Imperial trade. It consisted of eleven members, six representing the United Kingdom and one each, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa and Newfoundland.

A very searching investigation extending over a period of five years and embracing all sections of the Empire was conducted by the Commission. Its report, which was in several volumes, covered a great variety of subjects of industrial and commercial interest. Certain of the volumes dealt in a general way with specific Dominions; others assembled the data regarding raw materials, trade, transportation and the like for the Empire as a whole. Incidentally, a considerable impetus to statistical investigation was given in the preparation of memoranda for the Commission's use; in fact, when the Commission finally disbanded, which was at a date when the war was absorbing all of the available energy of the Dominions, the immediately im-

portant result was the comprehensive array of information which it had assembled against the return of normal conditions.

The perpetuation of these materials and the keeping of them up to date was naturally one of the prominent recommendations of the Commission's report. In its travels throughout the Empire, a feature strongly borne in upon the Commission was the incomparability of the official statistics of the several Dominions, as well as the discrepancies and omissions which characterized specific fields.

The situation was set forth in considerable detail in the report, and the suggestion made that there should be summoned forthwith a Conference of the official statisticians of the Empire, with a view to the improvement of existing conditions where possible, and the drawing up of a scheme of statistical coördination for the Empire as a whole. The rider was added that a central statistical bureau for the Empire should be set up, with a view to the maintenance of such scheme of coördination as might be agreed upon, and for the periodical collection, compilation and dissemination of comparative data of economic interest to the Empire.

The second recent step forward in the improvement of British Empire trade information may be considered as the meeting in London during the winter of 1920 of the conference of stat-

isticians in pursuance of the above recommendation, the pressure of the War having prevented earlier action. The conference, which met under the auspices of the United Kingdom Board of Trade, was in every way a success. It sat during a period of six weeks, in which the entire field of official statistics was passed in review and uniform principles laid down. In the forefront of the agenda was placed the proposal of a central statistical bureau. This, in the opinion of the Conference, was entirely feasible, and a constitution and working policy was drafted in some detail. The Bureau, it was recommended, should be established in London, under the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (as *ex officio* President of the Imperial Conference) and under the general control of a Council to be nominated by the several governments assenting. For immediate supervision a director with an adequate number of professional chiefs of divisions was suggested—also an advisory committee of twelve, to be nominated by the Council. Arrangements for an effective liaison between the Bureau and the various Dominions, including an interchange of staffs, were outlined.

The Bureau, it was decided, might cover but would not be limited to the following subjects: demography, labor, industrial and general social statistics, production, commerce, transport and communication, finance, and public administration. With regard to working methods, the Bureau would secure all the official reports prepared within the Empire, in accordance with the new scheme, as well as special statistical data, its publications to consist of (1) an annual statistical review of the Empire as a whole, (2) annual abstracts of the more important Empire statistics, and (3) periodical monographs on trade, production, communications, labor and the like.

Appended to this outline of a permanent central organization, a series of recommendations on procedure for general adoption in the more important statistical fields were made. From the present standpoint those relating to trade statistics will be of primary interest.

At the outset it was recognized that differences of conditions exist in the several countries which make it impossible to achieve complete uniformity. Nevertheless, on nine points resolutions were adopted which are calculated to achieve a large degree of practical comparability. These covered, respectively, uniformity in the statistical year and in the mode of valuation of imports and exports; more intensive study of the difficult problem involved in tracing the origin of imports and the ultimate destination of exports; uniformity in the list of countries to be distinguished; the clearer demarcation of transit and trans-shipment trade; improved treatment of imports and exports by parcel post and of government stores; and, doubtless most important of all, uniformity in the classification of imports and exports. On this final subject a word in more detail may be added.

It was admitted that no single scheme could usefully be recommended for adoption in all parts of the Empire. The items of the trade classification, for instance, are to a certain extent determined by tariff exigencies,—though even here a minimum standard may be set up. In the matter of grouping the items, however, uniformity in principle is obtainable. The conclusion reached at the Conference was that the items would require to be arranged not in one, but in several categories, if accurate and comparable aggregations of trade statistics were desired. For instance, classification might be based on (1) the component materials of commodities, (2) their pur-

pose and use, and (3) their origin with regard to the primary or extractive industries,—the three points of view most frequently called for in practice. The purpose of this recommendation was to escape in so far as possible the necessity—so constantly met in classification schemes which embrace inconsistent points of view—of making one group-total comprehensive at the expense of another. For instance, a scheme which contains such group-headings as “leather” and “wearing apparel” within the same category can not allocate “boots and shoes” without an inaccuracy under one or the other of these headings.

It may be added that in 1919 the Dominion Bureau of Statistics of Canada put into effect a classification scheme based on the principle above outlined. The items were edited and their number extended in consultation with the leading producers and traders of the country. For the publication of these items in the official monthly and annual reports, the “component material” principle is followed. At the same time, distinct schemes according to “purpose” and “origin”

respectively have been drawn up, and are used in the Bureau for the making of additional group analyses, which are published in connection with the main tables. While the method does not entirely eliminate the necessity for explanatory notes, it reduces the latter to a minimum and to a degree that is much more difficult if only a single category is employed. The scheme of main headings now used in Canada is given below as of general interest in the matter.

The British Empire Statistical Bureau is of course a project of the future and its establishment is entirely dependent upon the action of the several independent governments embraced within the Empire. Nevertheless, much benefit of a practical kind has been achieved from the interchange of views at first hand between the officials by whom the concrete problems of statistics are worked out in the several Dominions. Already much silent coördination and coöperation have been put in train, and though definite arrangements to maintain the contact thus established are desirable, the immediate results are greater than appear on the surface.

#### COMMODITY CLASSIFICATIONS USED IN CANADIAN TRADE STATISTICS

##### I. CLASSIFICATION BY CHIEF COMPONENT MATERIAL:

1. Vegetable products (except wood, fibres and chemicals). (65 sub-groups)
2. Animals and their products (except fibres and chemicals). (30 sub-groups)
3. Fibres, Textiles and Textile products. (45 sub-groups)
4. Wood, wood products and paper. (31 sub-groups)
5. Iron and its products. (41 sub-groups)
6. Non-ferrous metals and their products. (14 sub-groups)
7. Non-Metallic minerals and their products. (24 sub-groups)

8. Chemical and allied products. (47 sub-groups)
9. All other commodities. (15 sub-groups)

##### II. CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO PURPOSE:

1. Abrasives.
2. Arms, Military Equipment and Explosives. (5 sub-groups)
3. Beverages and infusions. (11 sub-groups)
4. Books, Stationery and Educational Supplies. (8 sub-groups)
5. Clothing. (10 sub-groups)

6. Containers, Wrapping and Packing Materials.  
(5 sub-groups)
7. Drugs, Medical and Dental Equipment and Supplies.  
(6 sub-groups)
8. Foods.  
(9 sub-groups)
9. Household Equipment.  
(12 sub-groups)
10. Industrial Equipment.  
(19 sub-groups)
11. Jewellery and Timepieces.  
(2 sub-groups)
12. Light, Heat and Power: Equipment and Supplies.  
(5 sub-groups)
13. Producers' Materials.  
(41 sub-groups)
14. Recreation Equipment and Supplies.  
(4 sub-groups)

15. Telegraph and telephone.
16. Tobacco and Smokers' Supplies.
17. Vehicles.  
(7 sub-groups)

### III. CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO ORIGIN:

1. Articles of Agricultural Origin.  
(a) Vegetable  
(b) Animal.
2. Articles of Marine Origin.
3. Articles of Forest Origin.
4. Articles of Mineral Origin.
5. Articles of Mixed Origin.

*Note:* Under the above five headings commodities are distinguished as (a) Raw Materials (b) Partly Manufactured Articles and (c) Fully Manufactured Articles, the arrangement of the first classification schedule (component materials) as to sub-heads being followed, in so far as possible.

## The League of Nations and International Trade Statistics

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SOON after the formation of the preliminary organizing skeleton of the Secretariat of the League of Nations, it was decided to hold an informal meeting of statisticians in order to consider in a general manner the way in which the new League organization could best assist in the development of international coöperation in statistics and to discuss the relation of the League with the various existing international institutions which dealt with this subject.

There were present at this meeting representatives of the two existing international institutions which were actually at the time publishing comparative statistics monthly—the Institute of Agriculture at Rome and the Bureau of the International Statistical Institute at the Hague.

The former of these two bodies, which has a membership of sixty adhering states, obtains its data directly from the various Governments and publishes, as is well known, an agricultural year book and a monthly bulletin of agricultural and commercial statistics. Perhaps the most important statistical function performed by this institution consists of the estimates of crops in the northern and southern hemispheres, but figures are also published concerning the movement of these crops, freight rates, prices, etc., and the Bureau has proved of considerable utility in suggesting to the various national departments suitable ways in which the existing statistical methods may be changed in order to ensure greater homogeneity and comparability of the data.